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ON THE ABUSE OF POETRY. A SATIRE.

To the Honourable RICHARD SAVAGE NASSAU, *Esq;*

By *N. WEEKES.*

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THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
Printed for RICHARD MANBY on *Ludgate-Hill.*
M.DCC.LIV.

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THE PREFACE.

NO Age, I believe, ſince the firſt Riſe of Arts and Sciences ever abounded with more Critics, or Pretenders to Criticiſm, than the Preſent; yet we have very Few who have Diſtinguiſh'd Themſelves in any eminent Degree to merit that Title. 'Tis indeed to be lamented that we have not; for a good Critic is not only of univerſal Benefit to the Republic of Letters, but the Reformation of Manners. Yet, ſuch is our Misfortune! There is no little Smatterer *in Learning, but will ſet up as a perfect Judge of the Performances of the truly Learned; and with a borrow'd Air of Wiſdom, and ſeeming Importance, pronounce his Sentiments on Compoſitions without Taſte or Judgment. And, there are, equally Ignorant, who are ſure to liſten to ſuch* Pretenders *with all the Marks of Wonder and Applauſe.*

No Work of real Merit can ever be ſufficiently eſteem'd unleſs its Excellencies and Beauties are properly pointed out by a ju-

dicious Critic. 'Tis in the Power of moſt Men to read, but Few to Diſtinguiſh. Let an unpoliſh'd Diamond be Preſented to an unſkilful Perſon, and he will ſcarce ſet a greater Value on it than a Pebble; but place it in the Hands of an Artiſt, and he will not only improve it to its proper Luſtre, but inform us of its Excellence and Worth. The celebrated Authors of Antiquity would never bear that Reputation they ſo juſtly poſſeſs, had not Men of Taſte and Diſcernment firſt eſtabliſh'd it. Milton's Paradiſe Loſt, I am apt to think, would ſtill have lain unregarded by ſome Thouſands, had not Mr. Addiſon taught us how to admire it, which we cannot ſufficiently do. I wiſh ſome learned and judicious Divine would in the ſame manner illuſtrate the ſeveral Excellencies of the ſacred Hiſtory: We have already innumerable Critiques on Shakeſpear and other Poets; and it would be more decent and becoming in Some to exert their Talents in the Defence of the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, than in correcting the Errors of the Drama. Beſides, it would be a means of bringing Religion into ſome Reputation, which it has at preſent almoſt loſt. The Writings of St. Paul would furniſh the Undertaker of ſuch a Taſk with the nobleſt Sentiments and ſublimeſt Eloquence; he might not only there ſhine as a divine Critic, but induce even Deiſts Themſelves to read, honour, and admire the ſacred Hiſtorian.

There are at this Time two different Societies of Critics; your Idlers at Coffee-Houſes, and your Writers of Magazines. The Remarks of the former are not indeed regarded, being entirely beneath all Notice; and thoſe of the latter, tho' they are of a public Nature, and ſhould be ſo executed as to be of ſervice to Authors, ſeem to be calculated more for the ſake of Self-Preſervation than Inſtruction. The firſt Publication of this Performance was the Winter before laſt; when I was not a little pleas'd to hear the

Author abus'd and condemn'd in more violent Terms than the Piece. There was ſcarce a Coffee-Houſe Acquaintance who thought himſelf a Judge of theſe kind of Compoſitions, (not knowing I was the Writer) but call'd me an impertinent, and a ſilly Fellow; while I, to make them more ridiculous, join'd in their ſevereſt Cenſures. But to convince thoſe Gentlemen that I am not afraid of their Cenſures, nor aſham'd to own the Motive of their Diſpleaſure, I have to this Edition prefix'd my Name. And now Mr. ——— how contemptibly muſt you look when next you ſee me? Make no Apology. I never harbour'd the leaſt favourable Opinion of your Taſte or Judgment in Poetry, or you would certainly have known the Author before the Performance was Printed. I will never quarrel with any Man who is ſo juſt as to tell me my Errors, but rather love and eſteem him; at the ſame time I cannot help being concern'd, when I ſee a Man make himſelf ridiculous, tho' it is at my Expence. Your Name has been ſufficiently expoſed by yourſelf, or I would here inſert it; altho' it would be no great addition to my Honour in letting the World know I was acquainted with ſo notorious a Scribler. According to your Practice (a too common Folly among modern Authors) I ſhould have wrote a long Preface to my Satire, and therein have pleaded my Youth, the ſhort Time I was compoſing the Piece, my Inexperience of the World, &c. &c. &c. hoping withal, that the courteous, generous, humane, and candid Reader would excuſe my many Errors, and attribute them more to Careleſſneſs than the want of Judgment; but theſe are Arts I deſpiſe: They are beneath a Man of Senſe, and ſhould be laugh'd at by every Reader. 'Tis not in my Nature or Inclination to make uſe of the leaſt Artifice to ſcreen a Performance of mine from the Cenſures of the Public; No! That would be deſcending beneath myſelf. I do not chuſe to purchaſe Fame by any other Motive than by real Merit; and that I do write for Fame I am not aſham'd to deny. Barely to ſhine will never ſatisfy my Ambition; I muſt excel,

cel, and even those who are excellent: For I had rather be the Author of an immortal Piece, than Master of the greatest Honours.

No Man can be a good Poet unless he is a good Critic. To know when we have said enough, is the most material Point of Knowledge requir'd in every Writer; and without that great Art, and nice Judgment of knowing when to leave off, Authors may please indeed, but never can excel. I could insert several Passages from many of our celebrated Poets, who have been deficient sometimes in this necessary Piece of Understanding; or out of too great regard to a few florid Lines, have stretch'd their Ideas to such a Length, as to destroy the Beauty of the Thought, and weaken the Force of the Sentiment. We are indeed most superstitiously fond of preserving every Line that has the least share of Merit in it, without any regard to its connection with the Subject, or application to the Sense. This vain attempt in being witty out of Season, and shining out of Pride, is a prevailing Foible amongst most Authors, and even those of the highest Class.

As nothing can be more ridiculous and absurd than to see Latin References to English Performances, so, I hope, the liberty I have taken in exposing such Practices in Page 14, is not only Pardonable, but Just. There are many Readers, I dare affirm, who are so ignorant as not to know the meaning of the Words Ibid, Vide, Post, Ante, Exit, Finis, with many others of the same stamp. I may perhaps incur the Censure of a great Number for descending to such Trifles, but every true Enemy to Pedantry will defend my Observation. The constant use of one of the above Words brings to my Memory a very pleasant Story. Some Gentlemen speaking of the many Things Sir Richard Blackmore wrote, were interrupted by an ignorant Fellow, saying: "He was persuaded, Sir Richard "Blackmore could never have wrote so much as Mr. Finis; for he "had

" had ſeen his Name to every Book."—From hence you may learn, gentle Reader! that Trifles themſelves are ſometimes Prejudicial.

Nor is this Pedantic Folly confin'd to Books alone; 'tis to be met with every where. I have often ſmil'd to ſee in every Church-Yard, and almoſt upon every Tomb-Stone, an Inſcription to the following Effect:

Hic Jacet.

The Body of *A. B.* of the Pariſh of ——

Obiit June the Eight, Ætat. Forty.

What can be more abſurd?—I muſt own, I am ſo much prejudic'd in favour of the Language of my Country, that I would recommend it to be uſed for all Motto's, Inſcriptions to public Edifices, &c. &c. &c. by which means it may become ſo faſhionable a Study, as to be learnt even by the Great. Nor ſhould I be a little pleas'd to ſee the Motto of the Britiſh *Coat of Arms tranſlated into another Language; 'tis a Compliment paid to that Nation as it now ſtands, which no* Engliſhman *of true Spirit can reliſh or approve.*

It has been ſaid, that I have ſpoke more favourably of Doctor Young *than he deſerves. Had theſe Men the leaſt Senſe or Judgment in Poetry, they would never have expoſed themſelves in ſpeaking ſo indifferently of a Man, who, by his Writings juſtly claims the firſt Rank among the* Engliſh *Poets. His Satires on the* Love of Fame *are beyond what any Language or Country ever produc'd. If any Perſon ſhould be deſirous of being entertain'd with Wit without Rudeneſs, Satire without Offence, and good Poetry without its Errors, I would recommend the* Univerſal Paſſion.

As to this Piece now under Inſpection, it has receiv'd many Alterations, and I flatter myſelf for the better; and thoſe Lines which

which were not unjustly objected to as being indifferent, and Others that escap'd a more exact Scrutiny, are entirely eras'd, or considerably improv'd. Yet, I am persuaded there are Faults still remaining; and such as are really so, I should be glad to see properly pointed out, that I might be the better enabled to make the Whole more perfect. And here I must beg leave to acknowledge the great Obligation I owe to — for his favourable Encomiums bestow'd on this Satire. When Men of superior Abilities and Understanding condescend to applaud the Efforts of a Juvenile Genius, it necessarily follows that he will take the first Opportunity to boast of it. It would be too much Vanity in me to insert the Opinion of the above Gentleman in behalf of this Piece; not that it was said in my Presence, or intended merely as a polite Compliment. To say he is one of the greatest Men of the Age, is saying too little of his exalted Worth; he is still more, his Country's Boast. However, from the nature of my Subject, I shall still expect the Censures of every bad Poet, and worse Critic; but their Blame or their Praise, shall be to me, equally Indifferent; for my Ambition is to amuse only Those, who have the Genius to be Amus'd; not that I am above Censure, or below Praise.

ON

ON THE ABUSE of POETRY.

A SATIRE.

PROVOK'D with *Poetry* that's daily writ,
Unjuſt in *Method*, and devoid of *Wit*,
Where little *Senſe* is thro' whole *Pages* ſpun,
And the dull *Thoughts* in duller *Numbers* run;
Where glaring *Ignorance*, with *Pride* combin'd,
Betray the *Weakneſs* of each *Author*'s Mind:
Such monſtrous *Things*, my *Satire*, dares expoſe,
Tho' *Poets*, *Wits*, and *Critics* riſe her Foes.

Reſolv'd to puniſh where the *Fault* is juſt,
Praiſe where ſhe ought, and pity where ſhe muſt;
To mend the *Taſte* of this degen'rate Age,
And on the *Mob* of *Scribblers* point her Rage:
Dauntleſs proceed—ye Foes to Senſe draw near,
And you, her Friends, lend an impartial Ear.

Let Fools for Lucre ſound the tuneful String;
'Tis all for Glory and for Fame I ſing.
Fond of the *Art*, I will protect its Cauſe,
Maintain its Virtues, and defend its Laws;
Scourge the vain Foes who ſhall its *Ends* prophane,
And ſave it from Deſtruction and Diſdain.

All grant true *Poetry*'s an Art divine,
And bleſt is he who can diſtinguiſh'd ſhine;
To ſoar above the Height of vulgar Fame,
And be rewarded with a *Poet*'s Name!
But Few there are who labour to excel;
All modern *Poetry* this *Truth* can tell.
The Luſt of Lucre fills the Place of Praiſe,
And *Crowns* of *Gold* exceed all *Crowns* of *Bays*.

Of all God's Creatures, ſure vain Man alone
Is to himſelf the leaſt, and ſlighteſt known;

Proud of his Parts, and mighty with Conceit,
Miſtakes his *Talents* thro' a vain Deceit;
Prompted by Weakneſs, or inſpir'd by Fame,
He graſps at Glory, but embraces Shame.
To prove this *Truth* needs no great Art of *Wit*,
Read thou the *Poems* that are daily writ.
See *Men* that might in other *Arts* have ſhin'd,
Grow *Fools* in *Verſe*, and hateful to Mankind;
Oppoſe thoſe Talents *Providence* has giv'n,
And will be *Poets* in deſpight of Heav'n.
Their *Verſes* prove how they miſtake their *Parts*,
Deſign'd by Nature for inferior Arts.
What Satire can on theſe be too ſevere?
They aim at Wit, when Folly is there Sphere.
No Creature quits its Element but Man,
At All he graſps within his narrow Span.

Tho' *Preſſes* groan, and *Stalls* abound with Lays,
There's ſcarce a *Poem* we can truly praiſe;
In Few the Sparks of Genius can be found,
And fewer ſtill with *Senſe* or *Wit* abound;
But *dull*, *inſipid*, *nerveleſs*, and *obſcene*,
With Language *wretched*, *vile*, *impure*, and *mean*.
Can I ſuch horrid *Traſh* with Patience read,
And check my Fury from each *Scribbler*'s Head?

" But why thus earneſt to correct the Age?
" Thy *Satire* will be vain, as is thy Rage.
" Did they regard the mighty Pen of *Pope?*
" And if he fail'd, can'ſt thou Succeſs e'er hope?
" Ceaſe, ceaſe, my Friend! the endleſs Taſk give o'er;
" Such *Scribblers* make true *Poets* ſhine the more:
" Like Stars they twinkle from their diſtant Spheres,
" But loſe their Glory when the Sun appears."

Thy Caution, NASSAU, I confeſs, is wiſe;
But muſt I privately ſuch *Works* deſpiſe?
When *Senſe* and *Wit* are ſeen no more to ſhine,
And *Truth* is baniſh'd from each Breaſt but THINE;
When *Worth* and *Virtue* fail to meet Applauſe,
Can I be dumb, and not aſſert their Cauſe?
Where is the Danger to expoſe ſuch Men?
Their only *Weapon* is a trifling *Pen:*
Let them, alas! employ that *Weapon* well,
I'll ſing their Praiſes, and their Virtues tell;
But while 'tis us'd to mangle Senſe in Rhime,
To torture Patience, and to murder Time,
Is not my *Satire* juſt? Can I offend?
The *Good*, the *Wiſe*, and *Gen'rous* will commend.

Forbear, raſh Men! ſome other Art abuſe;
Verſe ſtill is ſacred, and ſo is the *Muſe.*

Think

Think not a *Piece*, tho' *logically* wrought,
Can make you *Poets*, or be *Poets* thought;
Tho' great your *Learning*, and your *Theme* divine,
'Tis Taſte, ye *Vain!* muſt make the *Poet* ſhine.

No little *Rhimer* in theſe modern Days,
But ſets his *Nothings* at immortal Praiſe;
Will his melodious *Trifles* ſweet pour forth,
And wonder in himſelf at their vaſt Worth!
If in Deſcription he can make a Rhime,
He calls his *Genius* great, his *Wit* ſublime!
For puzzling Thoughts now ſtudies to ſurprize,
And vainly dreams the World believes him wiſe:
Hard Dictionary-Words ſhall next advance,
To cheat the Fool, and hide his Ignorance;
Pleas'd with his ſelf-conceited Parts, he vows
Parnaſſian Laurels ſhou'd adorn his Brows;
Condemns the Public for his ſlighted Fame,
When all his Works his Merits loud proclaim.

Many are theſe, in Verſe, who court Renown,
But prove the Jeſt and Scandal of the Town.
Blind to their Faults, and partial to their Rhimes,
They boaſt of Beauties, and reproach the Times;
Shall dare to call great *Cheſterfield* an Aſs,
In letting ſuch bright *Talents* heedleſs paſs.

Think not he'll *Patronize* your *Verſes* mean,
The Star muſt ſhine to have its Glory ſeen.

The Man who labours for a deathleſs Praiſe
By flowing Numbers, and poetic Lays,
Muſt firſt a juſt and proper *Taſte* attain;
For without Taſte your Poetry is vain.

What *Author* can expect in *Verſe* to ſhine,
Who feels no Raptures at a Golden Line?
Dull and laborious he ſpins out his Thoughts,
Alike inſenſible to Praiſe or Faults!
If *Concord*, *Rhime*, or *Numbers* he can write,
The reſt he judges good, and muſt delight;
From all true *Taſte* your half-wit *Poet* flies,
As Light's avoided by diſtemper'd Eyes.

Words obſolete and rude ſome ſhall revive;
For *Spencer*'s Taſte induſtriouſly they ſtrive:
Whole *Poems* in his *Stile* are daily writ,
Uncooth in *Numbers*, and devoid of *Wit*.
Such barb'rous *Strains* but ill adapt theſe Times;
Our Judgment's too refin'd to like ſuch Rhimes:
They were eſteem'd, I grant, in *Spencer*'s Days,
And claim from Moderns Reverence and Praiſe:

But now old Words to uſe gives juſt Offence;
For they corrupt our *Language*, *Taſte*, and *Senſe*.

Some too muſt imitate great *Milton*'s Stile,
Tho' weak their Genius, and tho' vain their Toil;
At his ſublime and lofty Senſe they aim,
Creep when he ſoars, and ſink involv'd with Shame.
See, ——, how heavy, flat, and dull;
Your mimic *Poet* is a trifling *Fool*.

If you muſt write, and have a Knack to Rhime,
Embrace ſome Subject worthy of your Time;
Your *Genius*, *Strength*, and *Parts* examine well,
And on what *Theme* your *Wit* can moſt excel:
Theſe Taſks perform'd, proceed with Caution on,
For much is to be loſt, and little won!
Let *Nature* dictate, and let *Art* refine,
And by the *Teſt* of *Judgment* prove each Line.
Be *eaſy*, *delicate*, *conciſe*, and *plain*,
Tho' free, ſublime; tho' learned, yet not vain:
Your Words well plac'd, and with right Judgment choſe,
Are certain *Rules* which true *ſublime* compoſe.

There are, who, thro' a vain Poetic *Rage*,
With *Rant* and *Fuſtian* ſwell their frantic *Page*;

Whoſe

Whoſe *Thoughts* are Riddles, and whoſe *Senſe* is Sound;
Truth they obſcure, and *Nature* they confound.
Such lofty Nothings, NASSAU, you deſpiſe;
Mere pompous Ignorance to judging Eyes!
Still make your Language to your Subject fit,
For what's moſt natural is moſt like *Wit*.
A clear *Idea*, perfectly expreſt,
To bear the ſtrongeſt Marks of *Truth* confeſt;
Whoſe *Senſe* and *Beauty* Proofs ſublime impreſs,
And moſt expreſſive in the plaineſt Dreſs.
Be not too diffident, nor yet too vain,
Read and correct, correct and read again;
Mark well the *Precepts* that the *Wiſe* impart,
And get each Rule of Poetry by Heart.
The young *Ideas* guard from all Offence,
And teach them how to ſpring and bloom in Senſe:
Let ev'ry *Art* the docile *Mind* enlarge,
Nor be too ſparing, nor too much o'er-charge.
Theſe *Rules* preſerv'd, and by the *Muſe* inſpir'd,
Your *Works* can never fail to be admir'd;
A *Poet*'s Name is not with eaſe attain'd,
By Pains and Labour *Glory* muſt be gain'd.

Out from your *Work* each trifling *Error* ſtrike;
The ſmalleſt *Faults* are apt to raiſe Diſlike:

As well-wrought *Pieces* give the nobleſt Joys,
So 'tis a Luxury that never cloys.

What made immortal *Pope* diſtinguiſh'd ſhine?
Truths well explain'd, and Sentiments divine.
Pope! ſacred Bard! in all thy *Works* we find
The copious Wiſdom of thy mighty Mind!
Strong and harmonious are thy Numbers writ,
Fraught with good Senſe, and arm'd with ſolid Wit:
Correct, yet free; conciſe, yet not obſcure;
In Judgment happy, and in Language pure.
Whoſe ev'ry Thought with Strength of Virtue ſhines,
And *Truths* immortal beam in all his Lines.

Doſt thou a Poet's deathleſs Name deſire?
To Wiſdom, Glory, and Applauſe aſpire?
Make *Pope* thy *Guide*, thy *Teacher*, and thy *Plan*;
I like the *Poet*, but I hate the *Man*.

Thro' Addison's inſtructive *Page* we find
The pureſt Eloquence to Learning join'd;
Who taught with Judgment, and with Spirit writ;
Whoſe Senſe was Nature, and whoſe Talent, Wit.
Chaſte in Expreſſion, elegant in Thought,
With ev'ry Grace, with ev'ry Bleſſing fraught:

Whoſe *Precepts* artfully attract our *Youth*,
And ſteal them into Virtue, Senſe, and Truth.

Accept, O ſacred *Shade!* accept this Praiſe,
From one who honours and adores thy *Lays*.
To thee alone I dedicate my Time.
Explore new Truths, and ſtudy Arts ſublime.
Fair *Virtue* ſtill laments her *Patron* dead,
Yet ſhe ſhall flouriſh while thy *Works* are read.

For Humour SWIFT may juſtly claim the Bays,
And be rewarded with eternal Praiſe!
His Wit is poignant, copious, and ſevere,
His Language nervous, maſterly, and clear:
But who can like his *Satire*, or his *Pride*?
He bares thoſe *Faults* which Nature bids to hide.
With groſs *Ideas* he degrades each Thought;
The want of Decency is his great Fault.

Nor ſhall immortal YOUNG neglected lie;
While I can ſing, his Praiſe ſhall never die.
Sententious Bard! to Virtue ever dear;
Sublime in Wiſdom, and to Truth ſevere!
Who reads thy *Satires* on the *Love of Fame*,
But feels the Raptures of thy ſacred Flame?

So juſt to Life each *Character* is drawn,
We ſee our *Pictures*, and our *Foibles* own.
At *Folly* and at *Vice* you point the Dart,
While *Truth* and *Manners* guide *it* to the Heart:
Nor *Scorn*, nor *Hate*, nor *Pride* diſgrace thy Lines,
But pure *Good-nature* through the *Sat'riſt* ſhines.

There are who in their *Satires* laugh at Vice,
For Preaching too Polite, for Truth too nice:
To rave is weak, to ſmile a dang'rous Fault;
Both *Knaves* and *Fools* can juſtify my Thought.
Pride treat with Scorn, hiſs *Pleaſure* from her Bow'r;
Spare not a Vice, tho' privileg'd by Pow'r.
To laugh is to encourage, not deſtroy;
They ſee your Mirth, and judge they give you Joy.
Your monſtrous *Crimes* for boldeſt *Satires* call,
Arm'd with ſharp Wit, and mix'd with bitt'reſt Gall:
At *Foibles* ſneer, at *Vice* ſeverely frown,
The *Fool* reproach, but knock the *Villain* down:
Bare deep his Crimes, diſſect him till he bleeds,
Probe to the Quick, and ſhew his fouleſt Deeds.

All modern *Satire* to *Abuſe* is grown,
Condemning *Men* with *Vices* not their own;
Who think the Buſineſs of their *Theme's* to bite,
And maul Mankind thro' Madneſs or thro' Spite:

On *Good* or *Bad*, to them 'tis all the ſame;
For, *Sportſmen* like, whate'er they meet is Game.
The *Fool*, the *Wiſe*, the *Virtuous*, and the *Knave*,
The *Villain* ſhameleſs, and the *Hero* brave,
Meet the ſame Fate; nor *Sex*, nor *Age* they ſpare,
But all alike their Frowns and Cenſures ſhare.
For baſe Reward, ſome brand an honeſt Fame
With deepeſt Crimes of Guilt, and blackeſt Shame:
Curſt be the *Wretch*, and doubly curſt his Lays,
Who points his Scandal where he ought to Praiſe;
May he be doom'd to endleſs Care and Pain,
And, like his baſe *Rewarder*, meet Diſdain.

There are who in a *Title* place their Wit,
Who reads is balk'd, who purchaſes is bit;
Pleas'd with the Fraud, they hold it no Offence,
And plainly prove they wanted but your Pence.

But he who moſt provokes an honeſt Heart
Is the dull *Cheat*; ſtill conſtant in his Art!
To raiſe your Hopes, and dreading leſt he fail
In his unfiniſh'd Book's uncertain Sale,
Inſcribes it ſtraight (for who can tax his Claim?)
To ſome diſtinguiſh'd Peer —— without a Name.
The vile Device, tho' ſtale, ſometimes ſucceeds;
Ev'n *Varus* has been mark'd for ſuch low Deeds.

When *Bards* turn *Auctioneers*, farewel good Senſe;
For who ſo mad to barter Bread for Eloquence?

Fix'd to each Piece, what Reader does not ſee
The Duke of Nothing, or the Earl of *C*?
O! Chesterfield! who envies not thy Fate!
Can Men of Senſe be caught without a Bait?
To ſteal Regard, and make their Volumes paſs,
Thy Name's an Artifice for each dull Aſs.—
Thou great Protector of the Poet's Laws!
True Stamp of Wit, and Sanction of Applauſe!
No Laurel triumphs but beneath thy Shade!
No Work immortaliz'd but by thy Aid!
Accept theſe Truths; nor think they flow from Art;
I ſcorn to flatter, tho' to win thy Heart.—

How *Paſtorals*, tho' vain, ſtill glut the *Town!*—
The very beſt are far beneath a Frown:
All what they ſay amount juſt to no more
Than what ten Thouſand Thouſand ſaid before;
Condemn'd, and juſtly, to the Grocer's Hands,
To be tranſported into foreign Lands.

Who can but ſmile to hear their *Nymphs* complain,
And *Shepherds* ſinging of Deſpair and Pain!

One tells his Friend the Suff'rings of his Heart
Aroſe from Beauty, and from *Cupid*'s Dart;
But the fair *Wanton* treats him with Diſdain,
And 'tis his Fate to love, but love in vain.
Another, in as wretched Verſe, declares
What griping Pangs of Jealouſy he bears!
Now proves his *Miſtreſs* perjur'd in her Love,
And now more faithful than the trueſt *Dove*;
Deſcribes his Nature raſh, ſuſpicious, mad;
And all is pitiful, and all is ſad!

Two *Shepherds* next are introduc'd to ſing,
One likes the *Summer* beſt, and one the *Spring*;
Both matchleſs in the *Art* of *piping* well,
A *Prize* is ſtak'd for him who ſhall excel:
A *Third* is call'd the *Wager* to decide;
Now *Eloquence* is heard in all its Pride!
Deſcriptions, *Riddles*, *Puns*, and *Similies*,
In wild Confuſion and Diſorder riſe!
While the vain *Author* thinks he greatly ſhines,
And in alternate *Verſe* applauds his Lines.

Defend us, PHOEBUS; from each trifling *Bard*;
Thy fav'rite *Land* with *Wiſdom* ſtill reward!
Aid thou her Sons who for *Protection* call,
Make them write better, or not write at all.

Dull

Dull *Odes* and grave *Epiſtles* ſome rehearſe,
Proud to be thought *Competitors* in Verſe.
What, tho' they differ from thoſe *Horace* writ;
True *Inſpiration* is the beſt of Wit!
The ſacred, tuneful, gay, melodious Nine,
Breathe in each Thought, and ſparkle in each Line;
While others grown more modeſt ſweetly ſing,
Deſcend, O Muſe! and tune a Fav'rite's String!
Trite *Invocations* uſher ev'ry *Piece*; —
Nor are they fulſome—they were us'd in *Greece*. –

But what's yet more abſurd, in ſome we find
Vile *Latin* Sentences with *Engliſh* join'd! –
Motto's, whoſe Senſe, do ev'ry Judge offend; –
While *Vid.* refers, and *Finis* ſpeaks the end.
Your *Ibids*, and your *Exits* too, declare
In Claſſic Words how excellent you are!
Shame on ſuch *Pedantries!* ſome Foe to Senſe, –
Firſt introduc'd the hateful vain Offence;
And Cuſtom to preſerve the idle Rule,
Spreads the Infection wide from Fool to Fool.

Of modern *Tragedies* who can complain? –
Melpomene herſelf inſpires each Strain!
The Rage in *Metaphors*, the Cant in *Grief*,
The pretty *Similies* that urge Relief,

The ſad *Alas*, the deep pathetic *Oh!*
To ſwell the Line, and ſpeak our mighty Woe,
(Tho' laugh'd at by the Witty and the Gay)
Are great *Eſſentials* in a modern Play.

All *Poetry* in truth is now *abus'd*,
For vileſt Ends the ſacred Art is us'd!
Few write with Judgment, and as few with Senſe;
Where *One* can pleaſe, a *Hundred* give Offence.

" Point out the Men; thy *Satire* ſtrikes at *All.*"
The Liſt now follows; mark Them as They fall.

See —— who in Ink will dabble ſtill,
And ſays a Nation's Fate demands his Quill!
Fond of his *Traſh* he ſtyles himſelf the Wiſe;
Some few aſſent, but Numbers more deſpiſe.
No nervous Lines his languid Diction grace,
Far-fetch'd Conceits riſe up in ev'ry Place;
No Wit to charm, no ſoothing Numbers roll,
Nor Thoughts ſublime to touch the rapt'rous Soul.

With what *Obſcurity* does PUZZLE write!
He labours to perplex us, not delight;
So hard to find his Meaning out, you'd ſwear
Nor Senſe nor Reaſon, Wit nor Nature there:

In pompous Words, his *Truths*, with *Art* are wrought,
But loſt in Riddles and the Maze of Thought!
I hate the Work that is not clear and plain,—
And deem the *Author* ignorant, or vain.

PEDANTUS with *Quotations* fills his Page,—
Provoking juſtly an indignant Rage.
No *Language* ſpoke in *Europe* but he quotes,
And all the *Work* is cramm'd with idle Notes.
Whoever reads is ſure to be perplex'd
With countleſs References intermix'd;
When ſuch *Pedantic Pieces* meet my Eyes,
I loathe the *Purport*, and the *Man* deſpiſe.
It ſpeaks as if the *Author* meant to ſhew
His mighty *Reading*, and his *Learning* too!
Quotations needleſs are but idle Arts,
To make the *Vulgar* wonder at their *Parts*.

With nurtur'd Rules PROLIXUS charms the Age,
And ſenſeleſs *Precepts* croud his lengthen'd *Page*.—
Who can with Patience, tho' a *Dunce* of Proſe,
Read the long Lines of his long Thoughts ill-choſe!
To gentleſt Sleep his Numbers gently lull;
No Monthly Motly Magazine more dull.

ORLANDO has ſome Wit, yet not refin'd;
Mere Flights of *Fancy* form his aukward Mind:
He ſeems to labour, not to write with Eaſe,
And ſuch Performances can never pleaſe.

Wit's a moſt dang'rous Tool to play withal,
If Judgment does not guide, you ſurely fall;
It will at beſt your Weakneſs much expoſe,
And leave you naked to the Scourge of Foes.
Ye raſh conceited Wits believe this Rule;
A Fool in Print will ever ſhine a Fool.

Your Fancy may beyond your Judgment ſoar,
And ſtrike out Beauties that were ne'er before,
But that, *Orlando*, ſeldom comes to paſs;
You riſe a *Monſter*, and conclude an *Aſs*.

How pleas'd is SCAURUS when he writes a *Song*!
His *Numbers* hobbling, and his *Judgment* wrong:
Yet in his Eye, he cries, how juſt! how fine!
And vows no Poetry is ſo Divine.
In *Learning* moſt unſkill'd, in *Genius* dull,
A rhyming *Blockhead*, and poetic *Fool*.
With too much *Foppery* to make a *Wit*,
And *Pride* diſdaining ever to ſubmit!
Swell'd with *Conceit* to that enormous Size,
He deems himſelf the *Wiſeſt* of the *Wiſe*.

Conceit

Conceit is *Error*'s Parent got by *Pride*,
Nurs'd up in *Flatt'ry*, and to *Vice* ally'd,
A *Bar* to Wiſdom, and to Truth a *Foe*.
Such *Scaurus* is, what Mortal does not know?
An *Object* hated, and a *Being* curſt,
For *Fools* conceited are of *Fools* the worſt.

Shall *Britain* be reproach'd in after Times,
For wretched *Authors*, and as wretched *Rhymes*,
When ſhe has flouriſh'd in ſublimeſt *Arts*?
Becauſe theſe *Scribblers* will expoſe their *Parts*?
Firſt periſh *All*. On them deſcend the Shame;
Nor blaſt the Honours of her ſacred Fame.

In *England*, let ſome *Bard*, ye *Pow'rs!* ariſe,
Sublime as *Plato*, and like *Homer*, wiſe;
To fire Mankind to *Actions* truly brave,
Revive loſt *Arts*, and ſinking *Virtue* ſave:
Make *Science* flouriſh, baniſh'd *Truth* reſtore,
Sing like the *Swan*, and like the Eagle, ſoar;
Let deathleſs *Pæans* hail the happy *Bard*,
And IMMORTALITY be his Reward.

Others, there are, who ſhall for Critics paſs,
Proclaim this Man a *Fool*, and that an *Aſs*.
Shall ev'ry *Work* without a Reaſon damn,
Becauſe they know perhaps, or hate the Man.

I from my Soul do hate when Fools pretend
To cenſure Things, they have not Pow'r to mend;
But with an *Air*, and to be reckon'd wiſe,
Will hum Applauſe, or artleſs Criticiſe.
What Raptures when a little Fault is found!
No *Miſer* values more a Thouſand Pound.
The *Whole* without Exception then is damn'd,
By *All* diſcarded, and by *All* confirm'd.

Sometimes an *Error* they pretend to find,
Which proves at length an *Error* of the Mind:
Nothing, tho' Perfect, can eſcape their Rage,
This *Point*'s ill-plac'd, that *Thought* ſuits not the Age;
It has no Similies, or void of Rule;
Your little *Critic* is a MIGHTY FOOL.

I love the Man who will my Errors ſhow;
How can I mend unleſs my Faults I know?
Let Fools be anger'd at a *Judge* ſincere,
My Taſk is to ſubmit, and to revere.
The Man of Senſe, when wrong, will ſet me right;
My Friend may flatter, knowing 'tis Polite.
But, thank my Stars! I have the Wit to know
If I deſerve the Praiſe, which they beſtow;
Can ſee the Arts vile *Flatterers* may uſe,
For *Flattery*'s to me a groſs *Abuſe*.

An honeſt *Praiſe* what *Mortal* don't deſire?
Praiſe ſpurs us on, and ſets our Souls on fire;
It gives an Edge to all the *Hero*'s Toils,
Who bleeds with Pride to cruſh his Country's Broils;
It ſoothes the *Tyrant*, and it fires the *Bard*;
It is of all good *Deeds* the ſweet Reward.

Few by good Deeds ſeek now to merit Praiſe,
Pride, *Ignorance*, and *Vice* fill up our Days:
While *Virtue*, *Learning*, *Breeding*, *Senſe*, and *Wit*,
Muſt yield to *Villains*, and to *Fools* ſubmit.
Strike, *Satire!* ſtrike; the *Times* call forth thy Rage,
With *Knaves* and *Fools* eternal Battles wage.

" When will this Fury and this Raving ceaſe?
" No more—be wiſe—'tis time to be at Peace.
" Thoſe very Men you *Fools* and *Scribblers* call,
" Are *Poets* deem'd, and *Poets* prais'd by All;
" Your *Satire* will at beſt but gain you Foes,
" Perhaps yet worſe—your mighty Self expoſe.
" Mend your own Faults; how incorrect! how dull!
" For love of Verſe you too commence a Fool:
" To graver Themes your growing Genius fit,
" You'd ſhine in *Morals* where you fail in *Wit*.
" If they write ill, muſt you too do the ſame?"
Let them who make me do ſo, bear the blame.

Great Faults I have, and not a few, I own;
" Why Publiſh then?" Becauſe, I wou'd be known.
Ambitious to atchieve a *Poet*'s Name,
And rank with *Authors* of immortal Fame;
Bleſt by the *Muſe*, with Senſe of *Glory* fir'd,
Anxious to pleaſe, and by the *God* inſpir'd,
I ruſh for Praiſe—" Beware, raſh YOUTH! Beware!
" The Paths of Glory you muſt tread with Care.
" A World of *Mortals* urge that Height to gain,
" And labour up the ſteep Aſcent with Pain.
" How few ſucceed let *Obſervation* teach;
" He ſure muſt fall who ſoars beyond his Reach.
" *Heroes* themſelves thro' many Dangers run,
" Before the envy'd *Prize* is ſafely won:
" With ſtricteſt Care the ſlipp'ry *Ways* explore;
" If once you fall, you fall to riſe no more."

Your Thoughts are juſt. But I, like other Men,
To ſhew my *Parts*, muſt trifle with my Pen;
Yet know, I'm not like *Scaurus*, nor his *Friend*,
Too Proud to learn, too Obſtinate to mend:
Convinc'd how weak, too great to be unknown!
(A Truth I'm not aſham'd ev'n here to own.)
To proper Men I fly for frank Advice;
Some give it freely, and ſome give it nice.

Some praiſe, ſome blame, ſome neither—ſave a Sneer,
You are of All, to me, the moſt ſincere.
With Care you read, with Candor you correct,
Explore my Errors, and my Faults detect;
Strict to my *Senſe*, and tender of my *Fame*,
You praiſe with Judgment, and with Judgment blame.
Wife without Pride, without vain Raptures, warm;
And bleſt with ev'ry Faculty to charm.
Impartially you cenſure and commend:
A gen'rous Critic in a faithful Friend.

I too my *Verſes* read with niceſt Care,
Diſſect my Errors, and my Weakneſs bear,
Free from Self-love, the *Whole*, I ſtrict explore;
The crabbedſt *Critic*, ſure! can do no more.
I blot, I add, I alter, and refine,
And weigh the ſolid Subſtance of each Line.
Juſt is my *End*, ev'n *Foes* themſelves muſt own,
And for Defects of Wit let that atone.

"A pretty Plea to foil the *Critic*'s Rage,
"And *Poets* too will in their Cauſe engage."
Not they, poor Souls! their wonted Wit will own,
'Tis far beneath a Cenſure, or a Frown.
Their Judgment's aſk'd? It is not worth a Damn;
And if they knew, O! how they'd maul the Man!

I ſcribble not to bribe a partial Praiſe,
My ſole Ambition is the Wiſe to pleaſe.

Let me be honour'd in ſucceeding Days,
For ſacred *Precepts*, and for virtuous *Lays*,
Immortal PHOEBUS! It is all I aſk,
And grant me Wiſdom for the GODLIKE TASK!
If e'er I vary from this glorious Rule,
O! rank me, HEAVEN! with the meaneſt Fool.

11. 7. 19

The END.